

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 27, 2010

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The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

Thank you for your excellent leadership of the Federal Communications Commission. This is a vital area of concern for our country's economy. Today, we are writing regarding the Commission's proposed changes to the compensation rates for the Interstate Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) Fund for providers of Video Relay Service (VRS).

As you know, VRS is a crucial service that allows deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals to make calls in American Sign Language to other individuals through videophones – without having to rely on typed text, which can be slower and more cumbersome to use. VRS technology has revolutionized communications for deaf individuals across the country, and this is the kind of innovation that we believe must receive continued support. This is an invaluable service to hundreds of deaf individuals in our home state of Maine, and VRS providers account for many quality jobs in Maine and across the country.

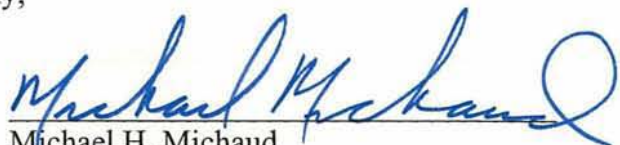
We understand that the Commission must strike a balance between compensating these providers adequately for the essential service that they provide, and remaining fiscally responsible and maintaining accountability for the funds they disburse. As you consider the rate changes, we urge you to maintain a commitment to preserving VRS and implement a long-term rate structure that is fair and consistent, so that deaf individuals in Maine and across the country can continue to access this important service.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with you and the Commission on this and other important issues.

Sincerely,



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Michael H. Michaud
Member of Congress



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 5, 2010

The Honorable Michael Michaud
U.S. House of Representatives
1124 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Michaud:

Thank you for your letter regarding the reimbursement rate for Video Relay Service (VRS). I share your support for VRS, which has become a critical communications tool for many who are deaf or hard of hearing.

On June 28, 2010, the Commission unanimously adopted two items to address immediate and long-term approaches for sustaining the vital Telecommunications Relay Services, of which VRS is one form. In an *Order*, the Commission sets interim VRS rates for the July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011 period at \$6.2390 for Tier I, \$6.2335 for Tier II, and \$5.0668 for Tier III. These rates represent the average of the current tiered rates and NECA's proposed rates based on actual, historical costs. The *Order* notes that these rates also reflect a balance between the goal of ensuring that VRS providers recover from the VRS Fund only the reasonable costs caused by their provision of VRS and the goal of ensuring quality and sufficient service during a one-year period.

The other item adopted on June 28 is a *Notice of Inquiry* to take a fresh look at the VRS rules with an eye to ensuring that this vital program remains effective, efficient, and sustainable in the future. The *Notice* poses questions that delve into many cost and reimbursement related issues, seeking to make the program less susceptible to the waste, fraud, and abuse that have plagued the current program. Bringing clarity and predictability to VRS compensation is high on the Commission's list of priorities, and we will resolve this proceeding as expeditiously as possible. I am enclosing a copy of the Commission's News Release for your information.

I appreciate your continuing interest in this very important matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Julius Genachowski



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 5, 2010

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
U.S. House of Representatives
1037 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Pingree:

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Julius Genachowski